

19 November 2013

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

Fraternal Greetings from Bishop's House!

**RIP – REV. FR MATHEW PLATHOTTAM MST**

We have just witnessed yet another tragedy in the Diocese: the untimely passing away of Rev. Mathew Plathottam MST on 21 October 2013 due to a massive heart attack. The sad news reached us on 22 October at 8.30 am when we had just begun our annual spiritual retreat. He was 60 years old and was undergoing treatment for heart related diseases. He served our Diocese for the last 10 years in Sengottai Mission, Palugal Parish and Chenamcode Parish. I thank you for accepting the suggestion to cancel the retreat and to take part in the last rites of Fr Mathew at Palugal and his funeral service next day at Deepti Bhavan, Bharnaganam.

Rev Fr Mathew was born on 17 September 1953 at Marangattupilly, Kerala. His parents were late Mr Joseph and Mrs Thresia Plathottam. He has six brothers and two sisters. After his high school studies he joined Deepti Minor Seminary in 1972. He belonged to the 4<sup>th</sup> batch of Deepti. He completed his Philosophical and Theological studies from Carmelgiri and Mangalappuzha seminaries respectively. He was ordained a Priest for MST Society on 29 December 1982. As a Priest, Fr Mathew served in different capacities in various Dioceses. He served in the Diocese of Mananthawady (present Bhadravathy) as Assistant Parish Priest at N.R. Pura (1983-1986) and as Parish Priest at Sangameswarpet (1985-1986). He worked as Assistant Director at Ragimuddanahalli (1986-1987) and Assistant Priest in-charge at Guthalu (1987-1988) in the Diocese of Mandya. Fr Mathew served as Parish Priest at Karappadam (1988-1991) and Karakurissi (1991-1995) in the Diocese of Palakkad, Vellanikode (1996-1999), Cheruthuruthy (1999-2002) and Vellarakad (2002-2004) in the diocese of Trichur. . He was director, Pulari Social Service Society, Shenkottai (2004- 2008), Parish priest at Palukal (2008- 2013) and at Chenamcode (2013 May – October) in the diocese of Thuckalay.

Rev. Fr Mathew's contribution to our Diocese is immense; he was instrumental in the development of Pulari Social Service Society at Sengottai and worked hard for the formation of Christian community there. Through various outreach programmes, he was able help hundreds of poor people to establish themselves in life. The second leg of his ministry in the Diocese was at Palukal as Parish Priest. It was his dream to have a new church built at Palukal and he took various steps to realise the same. Unfortunately he could not accomplish the project due to financial constraints.

He was a Priest par excellence after the heart of Christ; he knew his faithful and loved them dearly. He entered into their lives; he was a spiritual father, brother and counsellor to them. Despite his ill health, he carried out all the responsibilities as a Parish Priest. It seemed that, he had a special gift to listen to people and empathise with them. They saw in him a father who cared for them. He was endowed with the gift of healing which he faithfully carried out in the Parishes where he worked. His involvement in the *Vanthuparungal* monthly retreat programme at Palukal was something commendable. He was a wonderful companion to Rev. Fr Joseph Nedumpuram in carrying out devotedly the spiritual activities.

During his tenure, the Angel Garments Unit at Palukal witnessed steep growth and development. He was very much concerned about the welfare of its staff. He believed that better working conditions of the staff would bring about better results in the production of the centre. Like a good shepherd he knew every member of the staff and their family conditions. Every day he made it a point to visit them at the first floor of the building and held regular meetings to encourage them. I am sure the staff of the Angel Garments Unit as well as the parishioners will miss him dearly.

When he was transferred to Chenamcode in the month of May 2013, Rev Fr Mathew accepted the transfer with faith knowing that it would cause him a lot of inconveniences as he had to look after two mission centres both at Kulasekaram and Chenamcode. He was very faithful in carrying out his spiritual activities and never missed Holy Qurbana in the two mission stations. I had contacted him from Rome on his Birthday and Feast day and enquired about his health. After my return, he asked permission to go for a spiritual retreat at Anakara, Kanjirapally. Though the annual retreat for the priests in the diocese was scheduled from 21 October Fr. Mathew opted for making retreat in the previous week. This perhaps was his immediate preparation for his final journey.

On the evening of 21 October Fr. Mathew had supper with the sisters and told them about his bad health and they advised him to go for a health check up. He agreed to go to a doctor next day after morning mass. The next day, on 22<sup>nd</sup> October, the sisters were waiting for him for the morning mass. But since he did not come for the mass they went in search of him but they could not find him. They learned that his room was locked from inside, but there was no response to their call. They opened the window glass and to their shock they saw Fr. Mathew lying near his bed. They immediately informed me. I along with Fr. Jose Muttathupadam and Fr. Mathew Mulangacherry MST rushed to the spot and confirmed his death due to cardiac arrest. At 11.00 am we celebrated Holy Qurbana in Chenamcode parish to pray for the departed soul and later took the body to Palukal Parish where he served nearly five years. It was from here that we gave final farewell to Fr. Mathew from Thuckalay diocese. I along with all the fathers of the diocese celebrated the Holy Qurbana, a large number of sisters and faithful gathered in tears to bid good bye to Fr. Mathew.

The relatives of Fr. Mathew took the body to their paternal home at Marangattupilly in the night itself on 22 October, accompanied by the vicar General and a few fathers from our diocese. I reached his Parish in the next day morning and accompanied his body along with the family members and a large number of priests to Deepti Bhavan, Bharnaganam.

The body of Fr. Mathew reached Deepti Bhavan by 11.30 a.m. on 22<sup>nd</sup> and was kept at Aaraam Chapel for people to pay homage. Bishop Mar George Madathikandam, Bishop Mar Joseph Kallarangatt and Bishop Mar Jacob Muricken came and prayed for him and showed their love for him. A large number of priests and sisters from far and wide reached Deepti to pray for him and to show their solidarity. Good number of people had gathered from the different parishes of Thuckalay, Trichur and Palakkad where Fr. Mathew served. The presence of the large number of people was a clear indication of the place of Fr. Mathew in their hearts.

The funeral services started at Aaraam Chapel at 1.30 p.m. officiated by the Director General of MST. In the beginning he gave a brief sketch of the life and ministry of Fr. Mathew in different places. The Fr. Jose Muttathupadam, the Vicar General of our diocese read out the condolence message sent by the Major Archbishop from Bangkok, Thailand. In his message the Major Archbishop fondly remembered the good works that Fr. Mathew had done in the diocese when he was bishop there. I officiated the funeral mass and gave the homily.

No words can express our sincere gratitude to the Superior General and the members of the Society of St Thomas (MST) for generously lending Rev Fr Mathew Plathottam to our Diocese for nearly 10 years. His family members were a great support to him during his time of illness and with care and concern they took the body to their home. We thank the FCC community of Chenamcode for taking care of Rev. Fr Mathew and also seeing to the final preparation of the body to be taken to Kerala. The CMC community of Vanchinagar, the SH community of Palukal and the SABS community of Kulasekaram have been great support to Rev Fr Mathew during his ministry and I thank them on behalf of the Diocese. I was happy that we all went for the funeral service of Rev Fr Mathew and prayed for the departed soul. I thank all the Religious Sisters and Faithful who came in large numbers both at Palukal and Bharnaganam to take part in the final rites.

Rev Fr Mathew Plathottam was a simple, soft spoken, loving and committed missionary. He was a good pastor, who loved his people and died for them. All those who knew him loved him and gained something from him. He was hard working, doing everything possible for his people. I know it is very hard for us to accept this great loss. Yet we all bow to the feet of the Lord and submit to His will. We fully trust that He is in control of every situation. The way he prepared himself for his final journey, we are sure he has gone to his heavenly abode to receive his reward from the heavenly Father. We all miss Rev. Fr Mathew very much; but we have an advocate in heaven to intercede for all of us and for our Diocese. Let us remember him in our prayers. May he rest in peace in the Lord!

To commemorate the Months' Mind, there will be a concelebrated Holy Qurbana at Chenamcode on 21 November 2013. Kindly inform all the Sisters and the Faithful in your respective Parishes about it.

## **NEWS FROM THE DIOCESE**

### **HOME MISSION**

The Home Mission in Padanthalumoodu is complete and it has produced the desired results. We thank God for His inspiration and the spiritual transformation that has taken place through the guiding hands of our Sisters and Fathers. They had the final convention on 27 October 2013. At present Home Mission is taking place in Thettiyode Parish. We continue to remember the Home Mission Sisters, Fathers and the Faithful of Thettiyode. I am glad that some Parishes have asked for the Home Mission to be held earlier in order to prepare the Faithful before their annual feasts. I request the Palukal Parish to begin the preparation for the Home Mission. If anyone wants any information regarding Home Mission, kindly get in touch with its Director, Rev. Fr Jose Muttathupadam.

### **PASTORAL COUNCIL**

The Newly constituted 4<sup>th</sup> Pastoral Council of the Diocese had its first meeting on 2 November 2013. Out of 102 members 90 were present. Rev. Fr James Palakal, the Syngelus of Changanacherry Archdiocese animated the members on the topic 'Duties and Responsibilities of Pastoral Council.' This was followed by Group Discussions on the theme: Spiritual Renewal and New Mission Stations. Then the reports of the discussions were presented. I am happy to note that every one took part in the deliberations and gave constructive points for serious study and execution. They will be studied in our forthcoming Priests' Conference. I would like to thank you dear Fathers for your cooperation and support in the process of election of Pastoral Council members. Please inform the Pastoral Council members from your Parish that if they are absent consecutively three times, they will lose their membership in the Pastoral Council.

## **CML RALLY**

1 November was celebrated as All Saints' Day. On that day the KKSSS premises witnessed a hosts of young saints adorned in colourful attire along with 1500 CML children. The Mission League Rally was organised to commemorate the conclusion of the Year of Faith in the Diocese. The children along with their Animators, Sisters and Fathers marched from KKSSS, Kaluvilai to Plankalai Parish along the National High Way shouting Mission League and Year of Faith slogans. Since the whole Rally was given a competitive tone, the Forane level CML children displayed colourful uniforms, decorations and floats representing themes on the Year of Faith. It was a public witness of faith meant to instil faith in the hearts of young children.

I am grateful to Rev. Fr Ginoy Thottiyil, Director of CML for the meticulous planning and execution. Special words of thanks to Forane level CML Directors, all the Animators, Parish Priests and Sisters for encouraging and preparing the children. I could see your whole hearted cooperation and dedication. It looked as if each team was better than the other. We cannot but forget the Vincent de Paul and Marian Senai members who came in large numbers to help out in the Rally and distribution of refreshment. I thank Rev Fr Saji Elambaserril, Director, KKSSS and Rev. Fr Chako Akathara CMI and community for facilitating the programme in their Centres.

## **BIBLE EXIBHIBITIONS**

These days Forane-wise Bible exhibitions are going on in the Diocese. The first exhibitions were held in Thuckalay and Plankalai Foranes and later these exhibitions were conducted in Soosaipuram and Nithravilai Foranes. Other two Foranes will have the exhibitions later. I personally visited many Parishes and also heard from the Fathers about the creativity of the Catechism children in displaying Bible-related themes and topics. I must congratulate you dear Fathers for encouraging the teachers and children to prepare for the entire programme. So far the exhibitions were admirable in the Parishes; surely improvements are welcome. I feel that more than the presentations, the efforts that are put in for planning and preparing the exhibitions are more important as they are moments of great learning. Hence, do not worry if the projects did not come up to your expectations. As far as possible, kindly help the children to prepare themselves. I thank all of you for taking these exhibitions seriously. They are means to catechise the children. Special thanks to Rev. Fr Jossy Puthenpurakal, the Promoters, Headmasters and Teachers.

## **DIOSCESAN DAY**

The 17<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Day was celebrated on 9 November 2013 at Sangamam. All the Parishes and Institutions were represented. Fathers and Sisters came in large numbers to celebrate the solemn occasion. There were also many invited guests for the programme. On this day the Diocesan level conclusion of the Year of Faith and the Silver Jubilee of the Ordination of Rev. Fr Thomas Pawathuprambil were also celebrated. The key note address was delivered by His Excellency Vincent Mar Paulus, who spoke on the theme: experiencing of Faith. His Excellency Mar Paul Alappatt, and Rev. Fr Solomon, the VG of Kottar Diocese gave felicitation talks. The children of Manchalumoodu Forane gave thematic presentation on the Diocese of Thuckalay. It was well written and choreographed by Rev. Fathers Peter Kizhakeil and Joseph Nedumpuram together with Rev. Sisters and Teachers. Rev. Fr. Jose Muttathupadam, our VG, presented the activities of the Diocese in the form of a report. All the Foranes also presented various items on the occasion.

I would like to thank Rev. Fr Santhosh and all the committee members for planning and organising such an excellent programme befitting the occasion. Thank you, dear Fathers, for taking the trouble to bring representatives from your Parishes.

## HEALTH BULLETIN

- Rev. Fr. Ginoy Thottiyil underwent a knee surgery on 13 November at Kothamangalam. We keep him in our prayers that he may get well soon and come back to the Diocese as early as possible.
- Rev. Fr. Thomas Thekkeyil requires more care. He will be going to Thirupattur to meet an Aurvedic Doctor

## INFORMATION

1. Youth Leadership camp will be organised from 30 November to 1 December 2013. I am sure all of you have received specific invitation and information from our Youth Director Rev. Fr Joseph Santhosh. Youth is a strong force in our Parishes and it is up to us to channelize their energies in the right manner. I earnestly request all of you to choose best three candidates from your Parishes and propose their names to the Forane Youth Director.
2. Since our Annual Spiritual Retreat was cancelled, we have arranged for another Retreat from 10 December 6.00 am to 12 December 4.00 pm. I request you to reach Sangamam on 9 December evening. Kindly bring along with you the Breviary and Mass Register.
3. Our ST ALPHONSA ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE work at Soosaipuram is going on smoothly. The foundation for the compound wall is already built and soon we will be building the walls. Please continue to pray for the success of the project.
4. All the Tamil Medium Schools Children's *Kalaivizha* was organised on 15 November 2013 at Padanthalumoodu. More than 300 students along with all the teachers took part in the competitions. I thank Rev. Fr Christudas, the Correspondent of Tamil Medium Schools for organising the programme.
5. Our Annual Bible Convention will be held from 6-8 December at Padanthalumoodu. Kindly make this information available to the Faithful in the Parishes and prepare them for it. Rev. Fr M.I. Raj and his team from Chennai will be the main animating team. A spiritual preparation ahead of this Annual Bible Convention will be highly appreciated. A special collection is to be made to meet the expenses of the Bible Convention. Besides the Faithful, I expect the presence of all the Fathers on all the three days. There will be separate convention programme for the *Kulandai Iessu* children on those days. Rev. Fr Robins Kuzhikodil along with the Forane Directors is making the arrangements for the programme.
6. The *Marian Senai* organized a Rosary Procession from Thakkalivilai Parish Church to Soosaipuram Parish Church on 27 October 2013 at 3.00 pm. More than 800 members from various Parishes took part in the Procession. Recitation of Rosary and singing of hymns to our Blessed Mother made the procession meaningful and relevant. Thanks to Mr Paneer Selvam, the Director of Marian Senai, and all the members for organising this Marian Procession. Thanks to you dear Fathers for your whole-hearted support.
7. As I mentioned to you earlier the St Vincent De Paul Society completes 50 years of its dedicated service in our Diocese. To celebrate this event in a fitting manner a Diocesan level conclusion of the Golden Jubilee celebration will be held on 15 December 2013 at Padanthalumoodu. Besides the Vincent de Paul members every Parish should send some members to take part in the programme. I request you to join the celebrations after your Holy Qurbana in your Parishes.

8. The KKSSS will be organising a District level *Arokiyamela* 2013 on 23 November 2013 at Kaluvilai. It is going to be a unique programme aimed at supporting the poor sick people who require assistance and information regarding their health related problems. Kindly give sufficient publicity in your Parishes and ask the people to register their names in advance. The programme will begin at 8.30 am

## CONCLUSION

On 1 December, we shall enter the holy season Annunciation (*Subara*), while Latins and Armenians call it *Advent* comes from the Latin *advenio*, 'to come to,' and refers to the coming of Christ. This refers, first of all, to our celebration of Christ's birth at Christmas; but second, to the coming of Christ in our lives through grace and the Sacrament of Holy Communion; and finally, to His Second Coming at the end of time. Our preparations, therefore, should have all three comings in mind. We need to prepare our souls to receive Christ worthily.

Advent is living between memory and hope. It is concerned with that very connection between memory and hope which is so necessary for humans. Advent's intention is to awaken the most profound and basic emotional memory within us, namely, the memory of the God who became a child. This is a healing memory; it brings hope. The purpose of the Church's yearly celebration of Advent is continually to rehearse her great history of memories, to awaken the heart's memory so that it can discern the star of hope.

As pastors, it is our bounden duty to prepare our people to enter worthily into this holy season and live the Advent with them so that collectively as people of God we can celebrate the birth of Jesus on Christmas Night with great fervour and devotion.

Yours in Christ,

+ George Rajendran sdb  
Bishop of Thuckalay